



"Serving Michigan's Cattlemen Since 1960"

September 16, 2019

Dear Chairman Sheppard and Esteemed Members of the Committee,

We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments regarding House Bill 4687, a bill that would allow baiting of deer and elk across the entire state of Michigan. The Michigan Cattlemen's Association strongly opposes this legislation.

For decades, biologists have warned of the elevated risk of disease transmission associated with baiting and feeding wildlife. Until recently, those warnings were largely ignored. We are now battling two endemic disease infections in Michigan's deer herd. They include Bovine Tuberculosis (bTB) and Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). Both diseases present risks to human health as well.

A Lower Peninsula baiting and feeding ban was implemented by the Natural Resources Commission according to the best available biological science. That science is clear. Baiting and feeding concentrates deer and maintains deer density at unnaturally high levels. Tuberculosis bacteria and CWD prions are present and are transferred through deer saliva, which is heavily shed at baiting and feeding sites. These diseases can directly contaminate the feed source and can remain in the soil for years.

Research published in 2016 by Ramey et. al in the Journal of Preventive Veterinary Medicine modeled the effectiveness of several different bTB management practices where baiting was occurring and where baiting was eliminated. In every scenario, when baiting occurred, the practice was significantly less effective, and the number of years required to achieve zero disease transfer to livestock was significantly longer.

Michigan has a Memorandum of Understanding with the United States Department of Agriculture stating that the Michigan DNR will enforce the feeding and baiting bans in Michigan's TB zone. HB 4687 would put our state in direct violation of the MOU, likely triggering an immediate downgrade to Michigan's TB status. A status downgrade would be catastrophic to Michigan's cattle and dairy industries.

If Michigan allows baiting and feeding, we will only be shooting ourselves in the foot from a disease management, economic and human health standpoint. We urge you to oppose HB 4687.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

Brian Plank
President, Michigan Cattlemen's Association